

Australian Boys Choral Institute Child Safety Policy

Preamble

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have strategies to embed in their organisation a culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Protecting children from abuse is everybody's responsibility, and an organisation's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture in that organisation.

This good leadership and governance commitment is a foundation statement for the work we do and improvements we will make in this area in the future. Our Board has approved this statement.

Leadership in a child safe environment

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.

We will act to protect children from abuse in our organisation, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout the Australian Boys Choral Institute so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the values, attitudes and behaviours of the organisation.

A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. The Australian Boys Choral Institute should foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults should know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and volunteers should consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- physical violence
- sexual offences
- serious emotional or psychological abuse
- serious neglect

Rationale: Our commitment to child safety

The Australian Boys Choral Institute is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

When we are worried about a child's safety, we follow rigorously our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities.

The Australian Boys Choral Institute is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks as much as we can.

The Australian Boys Choral Institute has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse and safety risks.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If anyone reading this policy believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000. Parents can get support from Parentline Call 13 22 89. Children can get support from Kidshelpline Call 1800 55 1800.

Guidelines:

1. Our children:

1.1. This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

1.2. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome to participate in our selection processes. In particular we:

1.2.1. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children

1.2.2. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex) children

1.2.3. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

1.2.4. Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate if they meet the selection criteria of our organisation

2. Our staff and volunteers:

2.1. This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation

2.2. We ask that all of our staff and volunteers agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development or review of the code of conduct.

3. Support and supervision:

3.1. Support and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

3.2. Our organisation's culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We support our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

3.3. We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a

disability. We remain committed to the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex) children.

3.4. New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and

appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4. Recruitment:

4.1. We take all reasonable steps to employ highly skilled people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

4.2. We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

4.3. All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

4.4. We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

4.5. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

4.6. Recruitment material will make it clear that applicants may be cyber-vetted.

5. Fair procedures for personnel:

5.1. The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

5.2. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using an incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

5.3. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we take as an organisation.

6. Privacy:

6.1. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

7. Legislative responsibilities:

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

7.1. **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

7.2. **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

7.3. Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** will comply with their duties.

8. Risk management:

8.1. In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

8.2. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments.

9. Allegations, concerns and complaints:

9.1 Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and follows the Department of Education and Training Mandatory Reporting, complaints procedures and internal documentation practices to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

9.2 We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

9.3 We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

9.4 If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

9.4.1 A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)

9.4.2 Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed⁵

9.4.3 Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it

9.4.3 Observing suspicious behaviour.

10. Regular review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

11. Document History

Version	Author	Date	Adopted
1.0	The Australian Boys Choir	13 Sept 2016	Ratified by ABCI Board 10 October 2016

Review date: September 2018

Responsibility: ABCI Board and CEO